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New York

President:	Mr. Chowdhury	(Bangladesh)
Members:	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Cooney
	Jamaica	Mr. Ward
	Mali	Mr. Kassé
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Gatilov
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Tunisia	Mr. Jerandi
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchinsky
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Hume

Agenda

The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Eighth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2001/572).

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01-40971 (E)

The meeting was resumed at 3.10 p.m.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Uganda in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Beyendeza (Uganda) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): My delegation, too, is grateful for the briefings that we heard this morning.

We note the consistency of the assessments made by the Secretary-General in his report and by the recent Security Council mission in its report. The Council members' increasingly common analysis of and approach to the Great Lakes region is indeed a good basis for our deliberations this week on extending the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

The progress made in the peace process during the past few months is encouraging. At the same time, the challenges at hand as we prepare for the third phase of MONUC are enormous, as illustrated in the Secretary-General s report. The risk requires a carefully balanced approach which would allow us to play our part in maintaining the momentum of the peace process while minimizing, to the extent possible, the scope for mission creep. It is important that the new MONUC mandate be given, to the greatest extent possible, in conformity with the relevant recommendations in the Brahimi report.

Norway is supportive of the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report to extend the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 12 months, until 15 June 2002. We share his assessment that MONUC and the United Nations will be engaged in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for a considerable time. We believe that, by extending the mandate for one year, the international community is showing its commitment to supporting peace and security and to helping alleviate the sufferings of the people of the region.

We are supportive of the Secretary-General's request for additional personnel for MONUC. We are especially happy to see the proposed strengthening of the civilian component and we see the necessity of strengthening the operation's logistical capacity. However, we would have preferred to see a more detailed plan for the use of additional personnel.

Norway also shares the Secretary-General's concern about reports of eastward movements of armed groups and their incursion into Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania. This concern underlines the necessity of establishing a viable programme of disarmament, demobilization, resettlement, reintegration and repatriation for armed groups, as identified in the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. I note, however, the Secretary-General's assessment that the plans provided to date by the parties are not a sufficient basis for further United Nations action in this regard. Pressure on the parties must thus be maintained in order to have a proper plan for disarmament, demobilization, resettlement, reintegration and repatriation devised. Likewise, pressure must be applied vis-à-vis the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its allies to end any support for the negative forces operating in the region. We also share the view expressed by the Secretary-General that there can be no lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo without a comprehensive settlement of the situation in Burundi.

The problem of assuring effective civilian administration, including the security and safety of the civilian population, remains a serious challenge to peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We agree with the notion that this is the responsibility of the parties with de facto control and we urge those in control to address this problem in a serious manner. We share the view that human rights, child protection and civil affairs officers will help to protect the safety of the civilian population.

We remain deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation and the use of child soldiers throughout the region. Special Representative Olara Otunnu's statement today on the exploitation of children provided an extremely grim picture. Concerted and urgent efforts are called for by the government

forces, as well as the rebel groups. We look forward to working with Olara Otunnu on his five-point plan. The international community must relentlessly address the aspects relating to the humanitarian situation.

Norway would like to reiterate its support for regional initiatives to bring peace to the Great Lakes region.

Mr. Kassé (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank you, Sir, for having convened this public meeting pursuant to the issuance of the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which we commend.

My delegation welcomes the presence here today of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. Léonard She Okitundu. We thank him for his statement and commend the initiative of his Government to initiate direct, high-level negotiations with its neighbours and its decision to prohibit the recruitment of child soldiers and to order the demobilization of those already recruited.

Our thanks also go to the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, for his introduction of the report and to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for his oral briefing this morning. We entirely subscribe to the recommendations and programme of action on child soldiers that have been put forward.

The report before us today follows that which we considered here only a few days ago in the wake of the Security Council mission to the Great Lakes region. It allows us, as did the other, to continue to entertain optimism — cautious optimism, of course — with regard to the Lusaka peace process. My delegation agrees with the observations and conclusions of the report and would like to make the following comments.

First, despite important progress made on various aspects of the Lusaka process, we share the Secretary-General's view that there can be no lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo without a comprehensive settlement of the situation, particularly that which prevails in Burundi. In that connection, we strongly urge the continuation of bilateral summit meetings to achieve agreements based, inter alia, on common interests and mutual respect for the territorial integrity, national sovereignty and security of the States of the region.

Secondly, we are also of the view that the future of the Lusaka process depends on the commitment and cooperation of the parties. In that connection, we take due note of the significant progress achieved in the disengagement of forces and of the withdrawal and announced withdrawal of certain foreign forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are still greatly concerned, however, over the reluctance and manifest lack of zeal shown by the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie and the Front de libération du Congo towards, respectively, the demilitarization of Kisangani and disengagement in Equateur Province. This situation, which is dangerously hampering the process, should no longer be tolerated by the Security Council. The Council's resolutions and the instruments of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement must be implemented.

Thirdly, we subscribe to the idea of a transition to phase III deployment of MONUC. Such a transition should be brief and allow for the completion of planning for all the components of phase III. In that connection, we support the idea of a meeting in the context of the partnership between the Political Committee of the Lusaka Agreement and the Security Council next September.

Fourthly, with respect to the economic and humanitarian situation, we reiterate the appeal made to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

We have already welcomed the opening of the Congo River to navigation. We support the process of establishing a Congo River Basin commission and are prepared to endorse the concept of opening a humanitarian corridor to ease a situation that needs no description, since the figures speak for themselves.

Lastly, we support the extension of the mandate of MONUC for another 12 months and will vote in favour of the draft resolution authorizing that extension.

I cannot conclude without paying a vibrant to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ambassador Kamel Morjane, and, through him, to his entire team and to all the agencies on the ground for their efforts to restore peace to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to welcome Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to express appreciation for the informative presentations of Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Otunnu, as well as for the presence of Mr. Annabi.

The broad consensus in the Security Council on the goals and purposes that the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) must achieve in implementing the Lusaka Agreement makes it unnecessary for me to speak at length at this meeting.

The Council members who have preceded me have highlighted various aspects of the important commitment to peace that we have with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbouring countries. I had the opportunity to express that commitment personally to various interlocutors during our recent visit to the Great Lakes region. Therefore, allow me to make just a few comments on three points.

First, my delegation shares the view put forward by the Secretariat in its report that the insufficient information from the parties to the Lusaka Agreement prevents, at this time, the formulation of a broad strategy for the next phase of MONUC operations. In this regard, non-compliance with the deadlines for the presentation of timetables for the withdrawal of foreign troops and the total demobilization of armed groups, as well as certain delays in separating forces, is naturally somewhat disconcerting to us. However, this does not mean a loss of confidence in the process, because we also see positive signs. We urge the members of the Political Committee to deliver the information necessary to move to the next phase of MONUC operations.

Peace is an asset for which we must continue to strive, even in the face of strong resistance. Therefore, through this Council we will persist in peace activities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but our commitment will inevitably depend on the degree of fulfilment of obligations shown by our partners.

We attach great importance to bilateral meetings between the authorities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and Burundi, with a view to ending the support provided to the armed groups that operate on Congolese territory. We are concerned about recent reports on cross-border moves of contingents of the so-called negative forces; these movements constitute a kind of repatriation without disarmament and with serious consequences. In this regard, we underscore the upcoming meeting to be held between President Joseph Kabila and President Paul Kagame in the capital of Tanzania.

The second point is that my delegation wishes to express its deep concern about the humanitarian situation that the Democratic Republic of the Congo is experiencing, particularly caused by the massive displacement of people who are fleeing violence, the interruption of traditional sources of food supplies, the systematic plundering of the country's natural resources and the impact of the war on children's lives, as was eloquently presented by Mr. Olara Otunnu.

We find totally unacceptable the figure of 16 million people who have acute food needs and difficulty in gaining access to humanitarian organizations. We must promote an agreement between authorities and rebel groups to establish a human corridor for food delivery, as proposed by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

The question of the protection of the civilian population in areas that have been or will be evacuated by rebel groups causes us concern. If protection is the fundamental responsibility of the de facto occupiers of each region, the reports that are reaching us on respect for human rights and international humanitarian law are cause for anxiety. We support the prompt deployment of human rights monitors in sufficient numbers to accomplish this monitoring task.

We also note that the situation of the population has worsened as a result of the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the widespread sale of arms to violent countries and groups involved in the conflict, particularly small arms, which cause the majority of deaths and injuries among the population. We urge arms suppliers to exercise greater control over arms sales to this region of Africa.

With regard to the situation of children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we support the five-point plan presented by the Special Representative, Mr. Otunnu, and we will contribute so that its recommendations will be reflected in the draft resolution to be adopted at the end of this week.

Thirdly and lastly, my delegation wishes to pay an admiring tribute and to express its appreciation to the personnel of MONUC and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for the excellent work they are doing. We are prepared to authorize the extension of the Mission mandate, as proposed by the Secretary-General, with a view to a subsequent third phase. Therefore, we will support the text of the draft resolution, to be submitted by the French delegation, which is now in the negotiating phase and which will seek the progressive strengthening of the Mission through the expansion of its civilian staff component.

The President: Bangladesh was supposed to take the floor and I was supposed to make a statement in my national capacity, but as a gesture to the non-Council members, I will take the floor after they have spoken.

I invite the representative of Sweden to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Norström (Sweden): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Central and Eastern European Countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Liechtenstein, align themselves with this statement.

First of all, I would like to express our appreciation here for the presence of the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mr. She Okitundu. We are also very grateful for the briefings by Mr. Guéhenno and Mr. Otunnu that we heard this morning. I would also like to welcome and recognize the presence of Mr. Hédi Annabi.

For several months developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have inspired increasing hope. In his report of 8 June, the Secretary-General describes a situation not merely of obstacles and difficulties, but also of opportunities and positive trends. The European Union notes with satisfaction the Secretary-General's conclusion that progress has been made in key areas since April and his cautious optimism regarding the immediate future of the Lusaka peace process.

The European Union remains fully supportive of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, the consensual basis for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sustained advances should be ensured on all aspects of the agreement, in particular the orderly withdrawal of foreign troops, the national dialogue in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration, repatriation or resettlement of the armed groups. Continued progress depends, first and foremost, on the parties to the conflict. The role of the United Nations and the international community, including the European Union, and the contribution they can make to peace and development in the region is clearly defined by the actions of the parties themselves.

We therefore urge all parties to honour their commitments fully and in earnest, and to comply unconditionally with their obligations, thus enabling further progress to take place in the Lusaka peace process.

As for the role of the United Nations, important decisions are to be taken by the Council within the next couple of days on the future of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). Taking into account the current situation and both its positive and its troubling characteristics, the European Union agrees with the Secretary-General that the momentum generated by the disengagement of forces and the withdrawals of foreign forces should not be lost. The European Union thus welcomes the proposal of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of MONUC and to deploy, within the force level of 5,537, additional personnel for the functions envisaged for a transitional period leading up to the third phase.

The European Union welcomes the cooperation extended to MONUC by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its allies, and the cooperation between MONUC and the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) and the Ugandan People's Defence Forces (UPDF). However, the difficulties and delays caused by the Front de libération du Congo (FLC) and the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD) are unacceptable. The European Union considers particularly serious the detainment of MONUC observers by the FLC and the targeting of MONUC in disinformation campaigns. While welcoming the fact that disengagement and verification are near completion in three of the four sectors, we also

note with concern that obstructions have occurred, in particular by the FLC. All parties should finalize their disengagement and respect the new defensive positions. International humanitarian law must be respected, including in areas from which troops have been disengaged.

The recent Security Council mission to the region emphasized that the Council expected to see steady, consistent progress and strict adherence by the parties to all agreements and timetables regarding the withdrawal of foreign forces and the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation or resettlement of armed groups. The European Union fully endorses that position. As regards that process, it should be based primarily on voluntary reintegration and repatriation in order to be effective. The international community may support such a voluntary process, but the primary responsibility for implementation lies with the parties themselves. In particular, the Governments of Zimbabwe and of the Democratic Republic of the Congo should cease all support to such armed groups, and Rwanda should honour its commitment with a view to repatriation and reintegration. The European Union recognizes the need to differentiate among various categories of members of the armed groups, and to tackle urgently the question of groups of Rwandan origin. Furthermore, the demobilization of child soldiers should be a top priority.

The humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and throughout the region remains an area of most serious concern, as reflected in all recent reports of the Secretary-General. In order for genuine improvement to be possible, all parties must guarantee secure, rapid and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance. While welcoming the fact that access to vulnerable populations is improving, we note that faltering security remains a constant threat to crucial humanitarian and rehabilitation efforts, as illustrated by the deplorable attack on six workers of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in April.

The difficult humanitarian conditions, which particularly affect women and children, must be given increased international attention and financial assistance. The European Commission has decided to provide 35 million euros in humanitarian assistance and 120 million euros to finance poverty alleviation and the promotion of human rights. The European Union remains willing to contribute further to the improvement of the humanitarian situation and to the economic regeneration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Namibia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Theron (Namibia): Let me start, Sir, by saying how happy my delegation is to see you presiding over the work of the Security Council. We also want to thank you for arranging this important meeting today. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend Ambassador Cunningham for the excellent manner in which he conducted the work of the Council in May. I would further like to thank Mr. Guéhenno for introducing the report of the Secretary-General and Mr. Otunnu for his important briefing this morning. My delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr. Léonard She Okitundu, the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to today's meeting.

The report of the Secretary-General before the Council in document S/2001/572 takes cognizance of and plans for progress in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, although cautiously and while recognizing that the progress is still limited. However, my delegation welcomes the proposed steps and confirms the positive developments since the last Council meeting.

In that regard, while noting the present limit of 5,537 for the personnel of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), my delegation trusts that that number will soon be appropriately increased, taking into consideration the many functions to be performed by MONUC.

My delegation furthermore welcomes the progress reported with regard to the inter-Congolese dialogue. We commend the work done by the neutral facilitator, Sir Ketumile Masire, and in particular his announcement that a preparatory meeting to the dialogue will take place on 16 July. We note that his associates will visit all 11 provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in preparing for the dialogue process. It is furthermore our view that the preparatory meeting and the dialogue can take place on Congolese territory, and that they should be without outside interference.

We note that the humanitarian situation remains precarious and that serious human rights violations are continuing, in particular in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We support immediate measures aimed at stopping that tragedy. We also hope that, along with their associates, the murderers of the six personnel of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) will soon be apprehended and brought to justice. We commend Mr. Olara Otunnu for his efforts to highlight and improve the plight of children in armed conflict, and we welcome the positive results achieved thus far.

We continue to insist that the Council should ensure that Kisangani be completely demilitarized in accordance with resolution 1304 (2000). The reasons advanced for its continued occupation by military forces of the Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie (RCD) are unfounded, since MONUC troops are perfectly capable of providing security for the city. Moreover, the expansion of MONUC's presence, as proposed in the report of the Secretary-General, will adequately take care of any security concerns. We agree with the Secretary-General's assessment of the role that Kisangani could play in the economic and political regeneration of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The economic revival of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is of extreme importance to alleviate the suffering of the Congolese people and to improve the disastrous economic situation in their country. We welcome initiatives already undertaken to achieve that goal, and in particular we note the announcement just made by the representative of Sweden. But we also want to stress that massive bilateral and multilateral efforts will be required, considering the size and the population of the country. The international community should therefore continue to assist Congo's economic revival efforts.

In that regard, we recognize that the opening of the riverine network is an important step, and we share the view that it will have benefits not only for trade and freedom of movement but also for confidence-building and for the strengthening of national unity. We therefore deplore the recent threat by the RCD that the Uruguayan riverine unit will not be allowed to reach Kisangani. My delegation wishes also to reiterate the importance of the co-location of the Joint Military Commission (JMC) with MONUC in Kinshasa to allow the two bodies to coordinate military planning for the next stages of their operations.

As we have stated consistently, Namibia remains committed to the Lusaka peace process and to the full implementation of the Kampala and Harare disengagement plans and sub-plans. Hence, my delegation recognizes the importance of a detailed plan and modalities for assistance to be provided by the United Nations. In that regard, I wish to confirm here that on 3 May Namibia submitted to the JMC the required information on its forces, and that our withdrawal plans are on course, as required by relevant Security Council resolutions. My delegation can also confirm that, as mentioned this morning by Mr. Guéhenno, it is the intention of the Namibian Government to have all Namibian forces withdrawn from the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the end of August.

In conclusion, my delegation welcomes all efforts towards furthering the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We therefore support the extension of the mandate of MONUC for 12 months, until 15 June 2002. Furthermore, we join the Secretary-General in expressing appreciation to Mr. Kamel Morjane, to the MONUC Force Commander and to the men and women of MONUC for their efforts to help restore peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We wish Mr. Morjane a speedy recovery.

The President: The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Egypt. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like at the outset to extend our thanks to you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate and for affording us the opportunity to participate in this meeting on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on the role we expect the United Nations to play in this important phase of the peace process in that country. I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our two countries have excellent relations that serve to unite us.

The delegation of Egypt has considered with interest the report of the Secretary-General on the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We have also followed the activities of the Security Council mission that visited the Great Lakes region in the second half of May this year, as well as the valuable results that were

achieved during that mission. In this regard, my delegation would like to make a number of specific points that we believe need to be stressed.

First, the peace process in the Congo has lately witnessed a number of consecutive steps that have served to maintain the current momentum aimed at implementing the Lusaka Agreement in both its military and political components and at reaching a final and comprehensive settlement of the conflict, which has been tearing the Congo apart and draining the energies of its neighbours for almost three years. These steps have been reflected, inter alia, in the continued respect by the parties of the ceasefire; in the implementation of the disengagement plans between their forces in the field; and in their agreement on the principal framework that will govern the processes of withdrawing all foreign forces from the country and of disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating the armed groups taking refuge on Congolese soil.

Secondly, and in the same vein, we now look to the United Nations to intensify its efforts to support the parties in implementing their commitments in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement and the relevant Security Council resolutions; to create an environment conducive to the withdrawal of foreign forces from the Congo and to ending the problems posed by armed groups; and to establish the necessary arrangements to restore the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Congo and address the security concerns of its neighbours.

While we welcome the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report on the revised concept of operations for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and on the deployment of additional troops, observers and civilian personnel in the operation, we also hope that the United Nations will proceed to prepare the necessary plans to establish and deploy the third, expanded phase of the Mission so that the period we are about to enter — which we assume will be a transitional one — will not be prolonged, and so that the situation in the field will not become entrenched where it currently stands, that is, lacking the implementation of the specific steps needed to bring the Lusaka Agreement to its desired conclusion.

Thirdly, while we are aware of the essential prerequisites that must be met prior to the deployment of phase III of the operation — at the forefront of which is the provision by the parties of relevant information on the numbers, locations and armaments of their forces and those of the armed groups — we would also like to stress that the United Nations must be ready to address the challenges and risks it may face in such an expanded operation, as it did in Sierra Leone and, before that, in East Timor.

The Congo operation, like all other peacekeeping operations, will by its nature and the nature of the mission area be subject to a number of risks that cannot be avoided. This, however, should not serve as a cause for hesitation in the establishment of phase III, so long as the two primary conditions that the Secretary-General previously set for the deployment of United Nations personnel in the Congo are met. Those conditions are the provision of the necessary security guarantees for MONUC personnel, and the reaffirmation by the parties of their commitment to respect and implement the Lusaka Agreement.

Fourthly, of course we cannot ask the United Nations to undertake the primary role in the efforts to resolve the conflict in the Congo without reaffirming the responsibility that the parties themselves bear in moving forward with the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement and their responsibility to demonstrate the necessary political will — not only to prepare detailed plans for the withdrawal of foreign forces and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the armed groups, but also to implement what is agreed upon in good faith and to resolve any differences that may emerge between them within the Joint Military Commission, the Political Committee and the inter-Congolese dialogue under the facilitation of former President Masire.

We would also like to take this opportunity to encourage the parties to intensify their diplomatic contacts at the highest level in a manner that strongly drives the peace process forward and contributes to the building of trust among them at this critical time. In this regard, we welcome the steps being taken to organize a meeting between Presidents Kabila and Museveni, and we express the hope that those efforts will extend to arranging similar direct contacts between the leaderships in Kinshasa and Kigali.

Fifthly, we have also witnessed the increasing importance given by the Security Council and the Secretariat to the need to enhance the international support that must accompany the implementation of the

Lusaka Agreement in resuscitating the Congolese economy, rebuilding the infrastructure that was destroyed by the conflict and rehabilitating the social, educational and health institutions of the country. While we welcome the ideas and initiatives that the international community has begun to put forward in that regard, we also express the hope that the international community will prove its resolve to build a genuine peace in the Congo and to eradicate the basic causes that may prevent permanent peace and stability from taking root in the country. It should do so by generously contributing to the various programmes that may be put in place so that they do not remain a dead letter, as well as to end the suffering of the Congolese people, who have been deprived for many decades of enjoying the life of dignity and prosperity that they deserve.

Sixthly, Egypt will continue its active role in contributing to the restoration of permanent peace in the Congo and in the Great Lakes region — whether through its bilateral contacts with the parties concerned or within the Organization of African Unity. We will also maintain our support for the courageous efforts of the United Nations — represented by the Security Council and the Secretary-General and his Special Representative, Kamel Morjane — as well as our contribution to MONUC, in which Egypt is proud to be the largest provider of military observers among the 43 countries participating in the operation.

Before concluding, I would like to express our deep concern at the ongoing events in the Central African Republic following the failed coup attempt that erupted in Bangui over two weeks ago. Perhaps those events will strengthen the conviction of the United Nations that the security and political situation in the Great Lakes region continues to be extremely fragile and that any undue haste in terminating or reducing the presence of the United Nations in the region — or a failure to confront the inter-twined problems that continue to threaten international peace and security — will only result in multiple consequences of a much more serious nature than those already afflicting this important and strategic region in the heart of the African continent.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Akasaka (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting as a follow-up to the Security Council's recent mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. First of all, let me welcome the presence of Mr. She Okitundu, Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I would also like to thank Mr. Otunnu for his excellent report this morning.

My Government commends the Security Council for its work and for its timely report. We read with great interest the Secretary-General's eighth report on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), which is based on the mission's report. We appreciate its focus on reconstruction and development issues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and note its recommendation that MONUC's mandate be extended for one year.

Japan has been closely following the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recognizing that world stability and prosperity cannot prevail in the twenty-first century unless the problems of Africa are resolved. For this reason, my Government places great emphasis on the need to support the African countries' own efforts for their development, as well as conflict-prevention measures and refugee-assistance programmes. Today I would like to emphasize the following points with respect to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

First, my Government has long emphasized that peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo needs to be considered in the wider context of consolidating peace throughout the region, and must therefore be pursued with a comprehensive and integrated approach. Peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction and development, democratization and a halt to the illicit exploitation of natural resources must likewise be pursued from a regional perspective. Thus, my Government has argued that, as part of its efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Security Council should also address the economic and security problems in neighbouring Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda. For this reason the recent deterioration of the situation in Burundi is all the more worrisome to my Government. Japan shares the view of the Secretary-General that there can be no lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo without a comprehensive settlement of the situation in Burundi.

Secondly, my Government welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation that, while MONUC continues to complete phase II of its operations, the Security Council authorize the transition to phase III of MONUC deployment, which entails the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement of armed groups. We believe this overlapping of the activities for the completion of phase II with the preparatory activities of phase III will reduce the risk of losing momentum in the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Thirdly, an expansion of the civilian components of MONUC is necessary if the Security Council is to have a longer-term commitment to the peace process in the region.

Fourthly, Japan is greatly encouraged by Sir Ketumile Masire's announcement that a preparatory meeting for the inter-Congolese dialogue is to begin on 16 July. We sincerely hope that this will advance the democratization process, and we call upon the international community to support the facilitation efforts of Sir Ketumile Masire.

Finally, my Government welcomed the announcement of the reopening of the Congo River as well as the proposed establishment of a Congo River Basin Commission. The revitalization of trade by reopening the country's main inland waterway system would be a significant milestone on the path towards economic reconstruction and development.

Japan has provided emergency and humanitarian assistance as well as financial contributions to support the activities of the Joint Military Commission and the inter-Congolese dialogue. As the situation becomes more stable, we look forward to considering extending assistance to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo for its nation-building efforts.

The President: The next speaker is the representative of Burundi. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to congratulate you sincerely, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of June. The delegation of Burundi does not have the slightest doubt that you will lead the work of the Council with your usual flair. I also wish to welcome to the Council the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

This public meeting of the Security Council on the Democratic Republic of the Congo gives me an opportunity to pay tribute to the Council for its persistent efforts to restore peace to the Great Lakes region of Africa, as reflected, inter alia, in the Council's most recent visit to the region.

In regard to the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the report of the Security Council mission to the Great Lakes region, Burundi would like to recall the current threats to the security of our country and to the inter-Burundian peace process.

First of all, the good prospects for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo are, paradoxically but intentionally, at the root of the unfortunate evolution of the security situation in Burundi. The Secretary-General and the Security Council have understood this, and we are grateful to them for affirming that there will be no lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo if it must come at the expense of peace in Burundi.

Secondly, the countries of the region that sponsored the peace agreements signed at Arusha on 28 August 2000 must work as a united front to bring about an end to the war in Burundi. This is the most fervent wish of the Government and the people of Burundi. Peace will be regional or there will be no peace, as those who know the socio-political realities of this part of Africa are aware.

Every passing day points to a certain duplicity on the part of some countries of the region — an agenda that is no longer concealed, since some have said to the Security Council mission that the negative forces are negative here but not negative there, and that, in fact, they are not negative at all. This is troubling, given the fact that the Lusaka and Arusha agreements were signed under the moral umbrella of the representatives of all of the countries concerned from that same region.

The delegation of Burundi wishes to recall here that as long as the Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (FDD) and the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) — Burundi armed groups — do not put an end to the hostilities, as long as they are not disarmed in accordance with the Lusaka Agreement and repatriated to Burundi to be reintegrated socially — in the case of those who are not found guilty of crimes under the Arusha Agreement — those groups will be considered negative forces, to be

combated and brought to justice in Burundi, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in any other country. Indeed, they constitute a regional danger, just like their allies, the Interahamwe and the former Rwandan armed forces (ex-FAR), who became mercenaries of genocide in Africa.

What must be done? First of all, the Government of Burundi asks the Security Council not to allow the Lusaka and Arusha processes to destroy each other. The Council must find a formula that can ensure a deterrent presence at the borders of Burundi with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania, and avert the failure of current efforts to restore peace to the region. It is a fact that the transfer of war from the Democratic Republic of the Congo towards Burundi or Rwanda will perpetuate the regional conflict and make it even crueler.

Secondly, strong pressure must be brought to bear by those countries that have a real influence on the Burundian armed groups — in this case Tanzania more than any other country — to induce those groups to put an end to the violence and rejoin the peace process. We are convinced that if the FDD and the FNL had no rear bases or multifaceted external support, they would long ago have agreed to the conclusions of the Arusha Peace Agreement, as they had pledged to do.

We are gratified that today many members of the Security Council appealed to all those who have influence on those groups to induce them to take a more positive stance. But those groups want to continue the war, even though a political agreement was signed nine months ago. Unfortunately, the signals that they are sending out are not encouraging.

We read in the report of the Security Council mission, we read that the leader of the FDD had put forward a series of conditions before agreeing to sign or to negotiate a ceasefire agreement. In fact, it was political questions that were at issue, questions that are already answered in the Arusha Agreement.

Today I can inform the Security Council that I have seen a statement by the FDD in which it says that it will never sign a ceasefire agreement until political negotiations with it come to an end. It also states that it is shocked by the double language of the Security Council, because, according to the groups, when the Council met with Mr. Jean Bosco there was some degree of mutual understanding, and now they do not understand why the Council is still asking them to put an end to the hostilities.

The international community must also exert some pressure. We are pleased to note that the Security Council is doing so, in particular since its meeting with the two armed groups, in Kinshasa and in Dar es-Salaam. We urge the Council to provide for enforcement measures, as have been used elsewhere in similar cases, if the rebellion definitively turns its back on a negotiated solution.

The violence in Burundi is standing in the way of the implementation of the Peace Agreement. The various supporters of the armed groups do not give the impression of being interested in the implementation of the peace agreement; they too seem to follow the logic of military victory. Peace in Burundi must be saved, and the Arusha Agreement must be saved, before it is too late.

In conclusion, I should like to reiterate the will of the Government of Burundi to continue bilateral consultations, in particular with the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Tanzania, in the hope that this will yield positive results before it is too late.

I should also like once again to commend the Security Council's commitment to peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Burundi and to express the hope that the United Nations will join the efforts of Nelson Mandela, Ketumile Masire and the heads of State of the region to give renewed hope to those peoples of the Great Lakes region of Africa, in particular women, children, the elderly and even humanitarian workers, who are dying day by day or are wandering within and outside the borders.

The Government of Burundi would like to draw the attention of the Security Council to the fact that delays are dangerous and action is therefore urgent.

The President: I thank the representative of Burundi for the very kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Rwanda. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Gasana (Rwanda) (*spoke in French*): My country, Rwanda, would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, on your leadership and that of your country as you guide the work of the Security Council during this month of June. Rwanda would like to assure you

and all of the members of the Council of its full cooperation.

Rwanda welcomes the fact that you have convened a public meeting today to explain, analyse and extend the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC).

The very worst thing that the late President Mobutu did vis-à-vis our neighbours in the Congo was to ally himself strongly with those who planned and committed the genocide in Rwanda. Need we recall here that Mobutu's Congolese army fought side by side with the former Rwandan armed forces (ex-FAR) in Rwanda in 1990 against Rwandan citizens who were fighting for their right to a homeland after a forced exile of more than 30 years?

The reunion of those two friendly armies on the territory of the Congo has, since July 1994, led to serious problems for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Frankly, it can only be deplored, especially since it has caused us tremendous border security problems with the Congo, our neighbour.

Today, intensive fighting is taking place in two provinces of Rwanda that border the Congo, namely the province of Gisenyi and the province of Ruhengeri. This fighting is taking place between, on the one hand, those who planned and implemented the genocide in Rwanda and who found a welcome refuge in the Congo since 1994, and the Rwandan Patriotic Army on the other.

It is no secret to anyone that, from Mobutu's day to the post-Mobutu period, the Interahamwe militias and the former Rwandan Army Forces (ex-FAR), which perpetrated the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, have been the spearhead of Mobutu's army. If the strategy of the signatories of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement today is to wage war in the rear by sending us the Interahamwe militias and ex-Far armed to the teeth, rather than to send them disarmed and disengaged pursuant to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, that in itself is, in a way, a violation of the Agreement. Rwanda vigorously denounces that approach, which jeopardizes the entire Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement on which we found all our hopes.

It is said that history is perpetually repeating itself. In 1996 and 1997, the United Nations Development Programme, other United Nations agencies and Western embassies in Kigali drew maps of Rwanda, with the provinces bordering on the Democratic Republic of the Congo coloured red to indicate the threat of insecurity, ambushes and murder perpetrated by the ex-FAR and Interahamwe militias that had infiltrated the country from Congolese territory. That was the situation in 1996 that prompted the Rwandese Government to decide to fight them and to chase them into the territory of the Congo, where they received shelter and assistance. The same or a similar scenario is being played out again today. Two Rwandese border provinces have been designated in red as dangerous regions where no United Nations agency, no embassy and no non-governmental organization can venture, just as it was in 1996-1997.

We believe that the Security Council is duty-bound to assist Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the entire region, so that the Interahamwe militias and ex-Far responsible for the genocide in Rwanda can be disarmed and disengaged in accordance with the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.

Various reports and even some statements have highlighted what has commonly been called the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Rwanda once again reaffirms loud and clear that it went into the Congo for security reasons, threatened by the genocidal forces of the Interahamwe militias and ex-FAR operating from Congolese territory, and not in search of any natural resources of that neighbouring country. Proof of this can be found in the fighting taking place today, as we speak, along the Rwanda-Congo border, which attests to the fact that we went into the Congo for no other reason than the security of our country.

Rwanda therefore believes that we cannot come to the conclusion, on the basis of information howsoever troubling, that there has been any illegal exploitation, as yet unproved, of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The Panel of Experts has been asked to continue its investigation and to seek tangible proof of the allegations it made in its first report. Why not await the issuance of the next report before we reaffirm anything and proclaim our intentions?

I cannot conclude my statement without briefly addressing the eighth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. As members of the

Council are aware, we received the Security Council mission to the region. The mission met with members of the Political Committee in Lusaka under the chairmanship of Rwanda. The outcome of the meeting was set out in a joint communiqué annexed to the report before us today. It is also known that, in an effort fully to implement the provisions of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, Rwanda has taken the initiative to withdraw 200 kilometres from Pweto and to meet all the deadlines for withdrawal, in conjunction with the other components of the Agreement, taking into due account the requirements of our country's security. Our head of State had occasion to refer to this in his meeting at Kigali with the Security Council mission and on his recent travels in the region, including to Zimbabwe, where he met with his counterpart, President Mugabe, and elsewhere on the continent.

We are very pleased that the Secretary-General has spared no effort in support of the activities of the Security Council in the region with a view to assisting our people to re-establish peace, which everyone needs, especially those children to whom Mr. Otunnu referred this morning with such emotion and compassion.

We spoke earlier of the chagrin of Congolese and Rwandese alike at having to live to this day with the unfortunate legacies of Mobutu in the Congo and Habyarimana in Rwanda. Following their massacres of hundreds of thousands in Rwanda in 1994, Habyarimana's Interahamwe militias and the ex-FAR crossed the Rwanda-Congo border with their war machines and their spirit and philosophy of genocide, which, unfortunately for us all, they have exported to the peaceful people of the Congo. It is not my neighbours to my left at this table who created the Interahamwe and the ex-FAR, nor is it I myself who am responsible; they are the legacy of poor leaders on both sides.

The philosophy of genocide — the exclusion and extermination of others — that has been entrenched in the region was invoked by Rwandese civil society in Kigali during the Security Council's recent mission to the Great Lakes region. This spirit and philosophy of genocide have been propagated throughout the region by their advocates, the Interahamwe militias and the ex-FAR, who move freely throughout the region. The Security Council was unable to make an appropriate, adequate or precise response in Kigali, but it promised to continue to reflect on the genocidal spirit that continues to reign in the Great Lakes region. Why not undertake a joint action, all of us together — Rwanda, the Security Council, the Democratic Republic of the Congo — to neutralize those elements which are sowing the seeds of the genocidal philosophy in the Great Lakes region?

In conclusion, I reaffirm the willingness of the Government of Rwanda to pursue its close cooperation with the Security Council, with MONUC on the ground in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and with any other agency that is working for the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement in its entirety.

The President: I thank the representative of Rwanda for his kind words addressed to me and my country.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Uganda. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Beyendeza (Uganda): My delegation congratulates you, Mr. President, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and looks forward to an open and transparent handling of important issues — as you promised and now have demonstrated — such as the Democratic Republic of the Council and others that the Council will discuss during this month of your presidency.

The Ugandan delegation also welcomes the participation of the Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo today. We particularly want to emphasize the positive and constructive attitudes in his presentation, not only with regard to the security concerns of his country but also those of the neighbours, including my country, Uganda. Furthermore, my delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report and the able manner in which it was presented by the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Guéhenno. We also take note of the five-point programme of action proposed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict, following his recent visit to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For us in Uganda, the challenges raised by Ambassador Olara Otunnu have been our painful concerns for some time, following the continuing abduction of children in the northern part of Uganda by the Lord's Resistance Army. We would therefore like to renew our long-standing invitation to the Special Representative to make time in his busy schedule to

visit Uganda on the same subject. Maybe it could make a difference.

This is the second time in a relatively short period that the Security Council is devoting yet another open meeting to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although this meeting focuses primarily on the report of the Secretary-General and the draft resolution for the renewal of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), my delegation believes that some of the most important issues that have been covered today have also been covered in past Council meetings. My delegation will therefore be brief and will mention a few of the issues that we feel should be addressed.

First, Uganda has continued to implement the withdrawal policy within the framework of the Lusaka Peace Accord, as the Security Council has noted and has been recognized in the Secretary-General's report, S/2001/572, now before the Council. We want to assure the Council that this will continue.

Secondly, our country continues to cooperate with MONUC under the planned withdrawal programme and the programme for demobilization, disarming, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration. Again, the report of the Secretary-General has confirmed that Uganda is the only country, apart from Angola, that continues to provide information on numbers, disposition and armaments of our forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We shall continue to cooperate in this regard.

Thirdly, my delegation notes that the Secretary-General's report wishes to maintain the same level of operation, at 5,537 officers and men. In our view, this is too small a force and too large an area which is expected to be covered. We therefore propose that this process should be left open and be reviewed, even at midterm, to address the concerns as troops are withdrawn and MONUC is called upon to take more and more areas under its observation and control.

Fourthly, Uganda wishes once again to share some views expressed by some members of the Security Council concerning the issue of the violation of human rights. Our delegation believes that any violation of human rights is wrong in any circumstances, and therefore this matter should be addressed in the entirety of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Finally, my delegation would like to reaffirm its support for the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, for Uganda believes firmly that that Agreement addressed two fundamental areas in the root of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and indeed the region. The first area is the internal dimension of the conflict, which is going to be settled through a dialogue. The second is the external dimension, which addresses the security concerns of the Democratic Republic of the Congo itself and of its neighbours. My delegation would like to call upon all the signatories to Lusaka Agreement to implement it fully.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Bangladesh. After my statement I will give the floor to Ambassador Otunnu and to Mr. Annabi — if he wishes to take the floor on behalf of Mr. Guéhenno — if they have any point to raise.

I first thank Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno and Special Representative Olara Otunnu for their presentations, which have set the background for today's deliberations. We are engaged here in a critically important phase of the Lusaka peace process. The presence of Foreign Minister Leonard Okitundu with us today testifies to his Government's abiding commitment to the peace process and to cooperation with the United Nations. We have noted his Government's position on different aspects of the peace process, particularly on the matter of child soldiers. I am sure that his views will provide extremely important inputs to the Council's decision-making process.

I shall limit my observations to three specific points of special interest to Bangladesh.

First, child soldiers. I was struck by Ambassador Otunnu's observation that Congo is being robbed of its future. Ambassador Otunnu, whose mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo my delegation had pursued for the past few months, has brought us a grim, alarming report. The children of that country represent, as he reports, many faces of suffering: uprooted children, street children, war orphans, those separated from parents, child soldiers who are traumatized, abandoned, malnourished, sexually abused. Ambassador Otunnu's findings tell us most unequivocally that the question of the children of the Democratic Republic of the Congo needs to be

addressed as a matter of particular concern and high priority.

He has made some practical recommendations, particularly the five-point programme of action, which has the support of all political sides. We should give serious consideration to his proposals. The subregional dimension of which he spoke with regard to the issue of child soldiers also needs our attention. A report published yesterday by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers says that more than 120,000 children are currently fighting in Africa. Children are often seen as cheap and expendable fighters. In that context, I once again draw the attention of the Council to the proposal made by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh at the Security Council summit in September 2000 that of child-soldier-free zones be declared in various parts of the world.

The second point of interest to Bangladesh is the inter-Congolese dialogue. The Security Council mission considered the inter-Congolese dialogue to be the centrepiece of the entire peace process. It would address in a sustainable way the main source of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We welcome the decision of President Masire to convene a preparatory meeting on 16 July. It should not be further delayed. The parties should show pragmatism and a constructive spirit in their negotiations on procedural and substantive issues. Bangladesh concurs with the view of the Council mission that the dialogue should proceed, in all parts of the country, as speedily as possible. It would also be symbolically important to hold the dialogue within the territory of the Congo.

My third and final point relates to civilian components and humanitarian need. The most important matter before us at this stage is certainly the preparedness of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has been keeping us informed about the requirements for the third phase, starting more elaborately with his seventh report (S/2001/373). In his present report too he draws attention to the need for considerable expansion of the civilian components of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). The deployment of those components, including civilian police, is extremely important in the context of the need for the protection of civilians and related matters. We believe that the Council should take the lead in mobilizing necessary support in that regard.

The Council mission, in its report, underlined the economic needs of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and identified areas for attention, including the opening of riverine traffic, the renovation of rail and road networks and quick impact projects. It was stressed that broader economic assistance should accompany the peace process. It is time that the relevant organs and agencies of the United Nations system mobilized economic assistance to sustain peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Bangladesh drew attention to that humanitarian imperative in April, when the Council considered the seventh report of the Secretary-General. We hope that the United Nations funds and programmes, the Bretton Woods institutions and the international community are seriously engaged in the planning that was urged about two months ago. The people of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have suffered the scourge of a protracted war. We must not fail them as they stake everything to secure peace.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call on Mr. Otunnu.

Mr. Otunnu: I thank you, Mr. President, for inviting me to brief the Security Council, and I thank you very much for your deep interest and for your commitment to helping the children of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I have taken note of all the important comments made by Council members and other delegations. I will act on them and will continue the dialogue with the Council. My Office is at the Council's disposal to work with its members.

I very much hope that the Council will consider incorporating into the draft resolution it is preparing for subsequent adoption some of the practical recommendations I have placed before it.

Again, I thank you, Sir; I thank the members of the Council; and I thank all the other delegations that participated in this discussion. The children of the Democratic Republic of the Congo need us; we must not let them down.

The President: Mr. Guéhenno has been unable to remain in the Council Chamber, so in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Hédi Annabi,

Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I call on Mr. Annabi.

Mr. Annabi: I do not think there were any specific questions addressed to Mr. Guéhenno, and I know that members are eager to move on to their meeting with troop-contributing countries. I would like just to express our thanks to members of the Council for their kind words of appreciation regarding the work done by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in support of the peace process in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I will gladly convey those expressions of appreciation to Mr. Morjane. I will also convey to him the good wishes expressed by members of the Council for his prompt recovery. As members know, he was unable to be here today because he is recovering from malaria.

The President: I would indeed ask Mr. Annabi to convey to Ambassador Morjane our very best wishes for a speedy recovery. The Council has already sent him a get-well message, and we are looking forward to his quick recovery and to his being able to join us so that we can interact with him.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.